

Notice of Allowability

Application No.

10/524,664

Applicant(s)

IERACI ET AL.

Examiner

Ana M. Fortuna

Art Unit

1797

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address--

All claims being allowable, PROSECUTION ON THE MERITS IS (OR REMAINS) CLOSED in this application. If not included herewith (or previously mailed), a Notice of Allowance (PTOL-85) or other appropriate communication will be mailed in due course. **THIS NOTICE OF ALLOWABILITY IS NOT A GRANT OF PATENT RIGHTS.** This application is subject to withdrawal from issue at the initiative of the Office or upon petition by the applicant. See 37 CFR 1.313 and MPEP 1308.

1. ☒ This communication is responsive to 12/21/07.
2. ☒ The allowed claim(s) is/are 1-5, 7-12, 14-23, renumbered as claims 1-21.
3. ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some* c) ☐ None of the:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this national stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* Certified copies not received: _____.

Applicant has THREE MONTHS FROM THE "MAILING DATE" of this communication to file a reply complying with the requirements noted below. Failure to timely comply will result in ABANDONMENT of this application.

THIS THREE-MONTH PERIOD IS NOT EXTENDABLE.

4. ☐ A SUBSTITUTE OATH OR DECLARATION must be submitted. Note the attached EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT or NOTICE OF INFORMAL PATENT APPLICATION (PTO-152) which gives reason(s) why the oath or declaration is deficient.
5. ☐ CORRECTED DRAWINGS (as "replacement sheets") must be submitted.
- (a) ☐ including changes required by the Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948) attached
- 1) ☐ hereto or 2) ☐ to Paper No./Mail Date _____.
- (b) ☐ including changes required by the attached Examiner's Amendment / Comment or in the Office action of Paper No./Mail Date _____.
- Identifying indicia such as the application number (see 37 CFR 1.84(c)) should be written on the drawings in the front (not the back) of each sheet. Replacement sheet(s) should be labeled as such in the header according to 37 CFR 1.121(d).
6. ☐ DEPOSIT OF and/or INFORMATION about the deposit of BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL must be submitted. Note the attached Examiner's comment regarding REQUIREMENT FOR THE DEPOSIT OF BIOLOGICAL MATERIAL.

Attachment(s)

1. ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2. ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3. ☒ Information Disclosure Statements (PTO/SB/08),
Paper No./Mail Date 20080129
4. ☐ Examiner's Comment Regarding Requirement for Deposit
of Biological Material
5. ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
6. ☒ Interview Summary (PTO-413),
Paper No./Mail Date 1/17/08
7. ☒ Examiner's Amendment/Comment
8. ☒ Examiner's Statement of Reasons for Allowance
9. ☒ Other See Continuation Sheet.

Continuation of Attachment(s) 9. Other: Figure drawings filed on 2/11/05 are approved by the Examiner.

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

1. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Jeremy M. Jay on 1/17/08.

The application has been amended as follows:

Claim 19 (Amended) A process for splitting a fluoropolymer membrane comprising:

- a) providing an expanded fluoropolymer membrane having nodes and fibrils and having a first surface and a second surface and a thickness;
- b) bonding at least a portion of the first and/or second surface of the fluoropolymer membrane to a first and/or a second support;
- c) pulling or peeling the first support, the second support, or the first or second supports apart so that the fluoropolymer membrane splits in a dimension different from its thickness dimension to provide a fluoropolymer membrane having a third surface and a fourth surface.

In claim 23, line 1, after "19", insert - -, wherein the membrane has free fibrils at its surface- -.

REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE

2. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance: claims 1-19 are allowed over the prior art of record. The membrane structure of claims 1-2 and 23, and dependent claims is not disclosed or suggested in the prior art of record.

Conventional expanded fluoropolymer membranes, more particular ePTFE membranes have structures with nodes attached to fibrils defining pores with a size depending on the distance between nodes. The present membrane includes free fibrils and/or nodes at its surfaces produced by splitting the membrane, as in claim 19. The process of claim 19 is not suggested or disclosed in the prior art of record. Other membrane properties are inherited by the particular process, e.g. thickness reduction, etc (see figure 2).

3. JP49-060360 teaches discloses bonding more than one fluoropolymer tape layer, and detaching one layer to provide a microporous diaphragm with reduced thickness; The layer are not made form expanded fluoropolymer, and splitting in a direction different than its thickness direction is not disclosed. Based on these differences, the skilled artisan cannot predict the same results, e .g. a final expanded membrane with modified nodes and fibrils.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

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Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Ana M. Fortuna whose telephone number is (571) 272-1141. The examiner can normally be reached on 9:30-6:00 M-F.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, David R. Sample can be reached on (571) 272-1376. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Ana Fortuna/
Primary Examiner, AU1797

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January 17, 2008